

# Aspects Related to Breastfeeding in Premature Newborns: A Literature Review

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Received: 28 Apr 2022,

Received in revised form: 16 May 2022,

Accepted: 24 May 2022,

Available online: 31 May 2022

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**Keywords** —breastfeeding, breast-feeding, prematurity, preterm newborns

**Abstract**—Exclusive breastfeeding for premature newborn babies faces several challenges in order to be effective and to be able to offer the necessary benefits. This article was based on the selection of 13 studies related to breastfeeding and prematurity found in Scielo, CAPES and BVS in the last six years, which passed inclusion and exclusion criteria. The search was performed using the descriptors: breastfeeding, premature and preterm. It was concluded that the relationship between exclusive breastfeeding and preterm newborns may have difficulties in establishing itself, mainly due to factors related to maternal intention to breastfeed, support from family and health professionals, education, presence of the partner and among others. In addition, there was a lack of essential guidelines and the performance of a multidisciplinary team so that breastfeeding between mothers and their children was effective.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Breastfeeding (BF) is the most natural, safe and complete way to feed the child, capable of meeting all their nutritional and physiological needs, in addition to contributing to the child's growth and development in a healthy way. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health of Brazil, the recommendation is that mothers breastfeed their children for two years or more, and in the first six months breastfeeding must be done exclusively, or that is, with breast milk only. [1]

Breastfeeding rates in Brazil have grown considerably in recent years. According to the National Child Food and Nutrition Study (ENANI) [2], carried out in 2019, at least half of Brazilian children are breastfed for more than 1 year and 4 months. The survey also shows

that, in the country, 96.2% of children were breastfed at some point, with 62.4% of babies breastfed in the first hour of life, 45.8% are exclusively breastfed in the first semester, 52, 1% in the first year and 35.5% in the two years of life. Comparing the results with the numbers of the last 34 years, there is an increase of almost 13 times in the rate of exclusive breastfeeding in children under 4 months and about 16 times in those under 6 months. [2, 3]

It is important to emphasize that the act of breastfeeding is not just about nourishing the child, but also promotes a deep interaction between the mother and the baby, which increases the affective bond between both parties, in addition to other benefits for both, such as the significant reduction in infant mortality and a decrease in the incidence of breast, uterine and ovarian cancer in lactating women. [4]

Prematurity is the main cause of infant mortality in Brazil, which is in 10th place in the world ranking, where at least 12% of deliveries are premature. In this context, breastfeeding is extremely important, as it promotes the complete nutrition that the newborn needs. The breast milk of preterm mothers has in its composition different amounts of proteins, calories and immunity protection factors than the milk of full-term mothers. In this way, breastfeeding in these cases is responsible for favoring gastrointestinal maturation and increasing the neuropsychomotor performance of babies, in addition, it has a positive impact on the healthy development of the child until adulthood, by preventing diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and others. In addition, breastfeeding strengthens the bond, often already weakened due to long periods in the Neonatal ICU, between mother and baby. [5]

However, a breastfeeding premature baby is still a major challenge. Some factors tend to interrupt breastfeeding early, or even make it impossible for it to happen. Therefore, the present research seeks to answer the question: “What are the main aspects seen in research on breastfeeding in premature infants in the last 6 years?”, with the objective of listing and discussing such circumstances in order to lead students and professionals to a reflection on the current situation, and seek solutions for the complete success of breastfeeding preterm children.

It is expected that this study will provide an expansion of knowledge about breastfeeding in prematurity and improvement of the practice of nutrition professionals in this context, aiming at the development of strategies that help in the BF process of premature babies.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This is a literature review, which is characterized by being a method that makes feasible the synthesis of scientific evidence found on a given subject and that can be related to conduct in practice. [6]

The guiding question that this study aims to answer is: “What are the main aspects seen in research on breastfeeding in preterm infants in the last 6 years?” and the objective is to align the results found in order to analyze how they can be related to the exercise of the profession.

For the selection of articles, three data sources were chosen: Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and Virtual Health Library (VHL) where the results were distributed in Lilacs, Medline and

BDENF. The research was carried out using the following descriptors: “breastfeeding”, “premature” and “preterm”. Such words were formulated using the Boolean operator “and”.

The inclusion criteria established were: research carried out in the period from 2017 to 2022; be in article format; availability in Portuguese and online and research conducted in Brazil. For the exclusion criteria, we chose: articles that did not answer the guiding question about breastfeeding and preterm babies; theses and dissertations; international surveys and studies that did not contain abstracts.

For further analysis, summaries of the results of each of the surveys were prepared, so that they could be compared and discussed. In addition, for the presentation of the results, the studies were organized in two tables so that the analysis could occur more clearly: one containing the identification used, year of publication, the state where the research was reported, journal in which it was published, together with its impact factor and CAPES Quali; and the other table informing the titles of the articles, the objectives, methods used, main results and conclusions. The articles were identified from A<sup>1</sup> to A<sup>13</sup>, according to the proximity of the objectives of each one. All authors were cited in the development process, as well as authors of complementary research that were part of the analysis and discussion.

## III. RESULTS

In total, 623 studies were found, 14 in SciELO, 145 in CAPES articles and 464 in VHL. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 14 studies were selected, 3 in SciELO and 10 in the VHL and 1 in the CAPES platform, however the last one was excluded because it was duplicated. Therefore, in the end, 13 studies were selected for the work. The flowchart below illustrates the process of research and selection of articles:

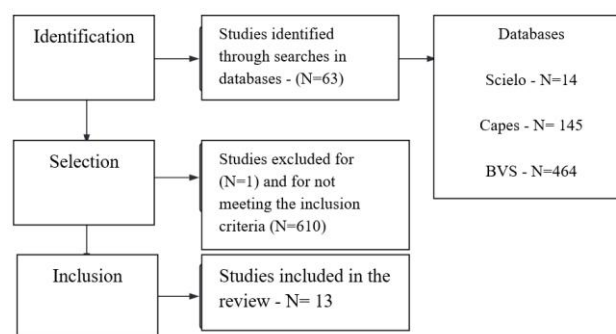


Fig.1- Flowchart of the research process.

Source: Authors, 2022

Table.1: Synthesis of the articles selected for the integrative review.

TITLE (ID)	AIM	METHODOLOGY	RESULTS	CONCLUSION
A <sup>1</sup> - Exclusive breastfeeding of premature infants and reasons for its interruption in the first month after hospital discharge [7]	To estimate the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding of preterm infants at hospital discharge, at 15 and 30 days, and to identify maternal allegations for its interruption.	Cross-sectional study	The prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding at discharge was 85.2%, 75% at 15 days and 46.3% at 30 days. The main allegation for the introduction of other foods and/or liquids was insufficient milk.	There was a significant reduction in exclusive breastfeeding rates after discharge. The study showed the importance of post-discharge follow-up to avoid early weaning, especially with educational actions that prevent the real and perceived insufficiencies of breast milk.
A <sup>2</sup> - Breastfeeding in preterm infants after hospital discharge: follow-up during the first year of life [8]	To assess the prevalence of breastfeeding among preterm infants after hospital discharge.	Cohort Study.	The results obtained showed the difficulty of breastfeeding in mothers of preterm infants below 33 weeks. 81.3% of babies were receiving breast milk, but most were not exclusively. At AME, the rate was 7.5% both at discharge and in the first month.	Even with difficulties, most mothers managed to maintain BF up to 4 months, but it is necessary to increase these rates to comply with the recommendations. Much is due to the fact that the present hospital is related to the BFHI, perhaps if it were not for this, the rates would be even lower.
A <sup>3</sup> - Predictive factors of interruption of exclusive breastfeeding in preterm infants: prospective cohort [9]	To assess the incidence of exclusive breastfeeding and the risk factors associated with the interruption of exclusive breastfeeding in preterm infants after hospital discharge.	Cohort Study.	The incidence of breastfeeding was 81.4% at hospital discharge and 66.4% at home, representing a 15% drop in the second week after hospital discharge. The results showed the difficulty of establishing EBF among preterm babies until hospital discharge, as well as maintaining it at home.	It is necessary to implement actions that promote the early initiation and maintenance of exclusive breastfeeding in premature infants.

A <sup>4</sup> - Exclusive breastfeeding in preterm infants from Baby-Friendly hospitals: a comparative study [10]	To compare the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) and to verify the factors associated with its interruption in preterm infants admitted to Baby-Friendly hospitals.	Comparative study.	The prevalence of EBF was 29.2% at the University Hospital and 15.3% at the Philanthropic Hospital. At hospital discharge, the clinical characteristics of the babies were predominant in the associations. After 15 days, there was a greater association with the sociodemographic characteristics of the parents.	The prevalence of EBF, which was low at the time of hospital discharge in both hospitals, reduced after discharge, reinforcing that other strategies are needed, in addition to those provided for in Baby-Friendly hospitals, for the promotion and support of EBF in premature infants.
A <sup>5</sup> - Breastfeeding in premature infants discharged from child-friendly hospitals in southeastern Brazil [11]	To describe the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) and associated factors at hospital discharge, in the first month after discharge and at six months, of preterm infants assisted at two Amigos da Criança hospitals in southeastern Brazil.	Descriptive and prospective study.	It was observed that 31% were on exclusive breastfeeding at discharge and in the first month at home, and 9.1% at six months. Exclusive breastfeeding rates in preterm infants are below recommendations, requiring special intervention programs.	It was concluded that EBF rates in preterm infants from the analyzed hospitals, at discharge, in the first month after discharge and at six months of life, are below national and international recommendations. In addition, the results showed that some factors may be associated with the prevalence of EBF in preterm infants.
A <sup>6</sup> - The breastfeeding process of the preterm baby: perspective of maternal records in the "baby diary" [12]	To describe the factors involved in the breastfeeding process of a preterm baby hospitalized in a Neonatal Unit recorded in a "Baby Diary" filled in by the mother.	Descriptive, prospective and longitudinal research.	The success of breastfeeding a preterm baby in the Neonatal Unit depends on several associated factors and remains a challenge for mothers, health professionals and families. Incentive strategies, such as the "Baby's Diary", proved to be adequate for the maintenance and intervention of nursing in care practice.	It was possible to perceive that the success of breastfeeding a preterm baby depends on several factors, being a challenge for mothers, for health professionals and for the family. Incentive strategies are very important for the success of the process, as in the case of the baby diary, which proved to be adequate for the maintenance and nursing intervention in care practice

A <sup>7</sup> - Support network for breastfeeding in late prematurity [13]	To analyze the support network of mothers of late preterm infants for breastfeeding	Exploratory-descriptive study, with a qualitative approach, supported by the theoretical and methodological framework of the Support Network.	Support networks were small and fragile, and the support received focused on household chores and care for premature babies, with the exception of breastfeeding. In addition, professional support for breastfeeding was also fragile.	It is necessary to include the women's support network in their care and home monitoring so that the infants have the necessary help for the success of breastfeeding.
A <sup>8</sup> - Self-efficacy in breastfeeding among mothers of premature babies [14]	To assess self-efficacy in breastfeeding among premature mothers and babies.	Descriptive, cross-sectional study with a quantitative approach.	All mothers showed self-efficacy in breastfeeding.	The importance of nurses in acting throughout the pregnancy-puerperal cycle is perceived in order to maintain maternal trust, as well as focus on aspects that may interfere with it.
A <sup>9</sup> - Knowledge about the benefits of breastfeeding and disadvantages of the pacifier related to the practice of mothers when dealing with preterm newborns [15]	To assess the knowledge and expectations of mothers of preterm newborns admitted to a neonatal intensive care unit about breastfeeding and pacifier use.	Descriptive, observational study with a qualitative approach.	The participants' expectations regarding breastfeeding were positive, as they reported benefits for both mother and baby, but had difficulties in maintaining exclusive breastfeeding, introducing the bottle, which was already acquired by most of them before birth. The mothers showed knowledge about breastfeeding and the harm of using a pacifier, but they changed their opinion when dealing with the baby in practice.	The mothers demonstrated previous knowledge about the benefits of breastfeeding and the disadvantages of the pacifier, but they changed their opinion when dealing with the baby in practice.
A <sup>10</sup> - Relationship between the duration of the kangaroo position and mother-preterm child interaction at hospital discharge [16]	To analyze the influence of Kangaroo Position duration on the initial interactions of the mother-preterm child dyad	Observational study.	The longer the time in Kangaroo Position, the more newborns made attempts at physical contact with their mothers during breastfeeding; and the longer the time in Kangaroo Position, the less mothers	The Kangaroo position favored contact, the preterm newborn has the ability to go beyond feeding and have the moment of breastfeeding as an opportunity to carry out initial exchanges with the mother.

			talked with their children.	
A <sup>11</sup> - Factors associated with the development of skin allergies in premature infants in the first year of life [17]	To identify factors associated with the development of skin allergies in the first year of life in moderate and late preterm infants.	Sectional research.	The prevalence of skin allergy, in the perception of caregivers, among late and moderate preterm infants was 16%. It is a more intense characteristic in those who present respiratory and gastrointestinal clinical manifestations, whether conditioning or cause-effect. Breastfeeding proved to be a protective factor in the 1st year of life.	Breastfeeding proved to be a protective factor in the 1st year of life against skin allergies.
A <sup>12</sup> - Oral dysfunction and feeding difficulties during complementary feeding in preterm children [18]	To investigate the association between oral motor dysfunction and feeding difficulties during the process of introducing complementary feeding in preterm children.	Cross-sectional, observational and quantitative study.	Complementary feeding was introduced in the sixth month of corrected gestational age by almost half of the mothers, and most reported some type of difficulty in this introduction. Extreme prematurity revealed an association with defensive eating behavior. No significant association was found between oral motor dysfunction and feeding difficulties.	No significant association was found between motor and oral dysfunction and feeding difficulties.



A <sup>13</sup> - Electrolyte and mineral composition of milk from term infants, pre and post pasteurization and raw milk from mothers of preterm newborns [19]	To determine and compare the concentrations of electrolytes and minerals in human milk in three groups: samples analyzed before and after pasteurization of lactating term donors and a sample of raw milk collected at the bedside of mothers of preterm newborns.	Descriptive and cross-sectional study.	A significant reduction in Ca, P and K contents was observed after pasteurization. Raw milk samples collected at the bedside had statistically higher levels of Na than term donor milk, Ca and P only reached the recommended intake if breast milk was offered in a volume of 60 ml every 3 hours. Mg concentrations did not differ between groups.	There was a significant reduction of Ca, P and K in the post-pasteurization samples and the Na values in raw milk collected at the bedside were higher than those pre-pasteurization.
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Table.02 Identification of articles, year of publication, state, journal, impact factor and Qualis CAPES

ID	YEAR	STATE	JOURNAL	ImpactFactor	Qualis CAPES
A <sup>1</sup>	2019	RS	Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem	0,638	B1
A <sup>2</sup>	2018	RJ	Ciências & Saúde Coletiva	1,336	A3
A <sup>3</sup>	2018	SP	Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem	0,705	A2
A <sup>4</sup>	2017	RJ	Online Brazilian Journal of Nursing	0,133	B1
A <sup>5</sup>	2018	GO RJ/SP	Revista Eletrônica de Enfermagem	•	B1
A <sup>6</sup>	2020	PR	Semina: Ciências Biológicas e da Saúde	1,71	B3
A <sup>7</sup>	2020	PR	Ciência, Cuidado e Saúde	•	B2
A <sup>8</sup>	2021	RJ	Revista de Pesquisa Cuidado é Fundamental Online	•	B2
A <sup>9</sup>	2017	SP	Revista Paulista de Pediatria	0,784	B3
A <sup>10</sup>	2017	SP	Revista Paulista de Pediatria	0,784	B3
A <sup>11</sup>	2021	RS	Revista Gaúcha de Enfermagem	0,638	B1
A <sup>12</sup>	2021	BA	CoDAS	0,732	B4

A <sup>13</sup>	2018	SP	Revista Paulista de Pediatria	0,784	B3
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Source: Authors, 2022

Of the selected articles, 3 are from 2017, 4 from 2018, 1 were published in 2019, 2 in 2020 and 3 in 2021. As for the state in which the research was published, 4 were in São Paulo (SP), 3 in Rio de Janeiro (RJ), 2 in Paraná (PR), 2 in Rio Grande do Sul (RS), 1 in Bahia (BA) and 1 was published in Goiás (GO), Rio de Janeiro (RJ) and São Paulo (SP). Analyzing by regions, it is possible to see that the achievements and publications of the research used are mainly concentrated in the southeastern region of Brazil, with 53.85%. In the southern region, the percentage is already lower, with 30.77%, and in Bahia, 7.69%.

Furthermore, when analyzing the journals in which the studies were published, as well as the content of the research itself, it can be seen that most of the articles analyzed in this review were written or directed to nursing professionals, a fact that may be related to the intense contact between them and those responsible for preterm babies throughout the period after birth and their respective care. However, this reality reveals that there is a deficiency in the performance and research of the multidisciplinary team in the context of prematurity and breastfeeding, although there is an incentive for all areas to work together, including nutrition.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The present review showed that the publications are mainly divided into analyzing the incidence of breastfeeding in preterm babies, listing the factors involved in the breastfeeding process, observing the aspects that contribute to the early interruption of Breastfeeding (BF), examining the success implementation of educational actions on techniques that aim to assist the course of breastfeeding inside and outside the hospital, assess the importance of mothers' knowledge on the subject and explore the importance of instructions and professional monitoring during this period. Articles A<sup>11</sup>, A<sup>12</sup> and A<sup>13</sup> have more specific objectives, such as investigating factors associated with the development of skin allergies, oral motor difficulties and their association with breastfeeding and the composition of breast milk of mothers of premature babies.

LIMA et al. [7] in their study, explains that breastfeeding guarantees many benefits to premature babies, promoting a lower incidence of necrotizing enterocolitis, sepsis and retinopathy of prematurity, increased neuropsychomotor performance, strengthening

the mother-child bond, decreased hospitalization time and reduction in the occurrence of hospitalizations. However, unfortunately statistics show that breastfeeding starts later and lasts for a shorter period in preterm newborns.

The importance of breastfeeding was described by TEIXEIRA et al. [20] (2022), and is recommended mainly for helping the progression of oral feeding, as it contains immunoprotective and growth substances, which promote gastrointestinal adaptation and maturation, improving dietary tolerance and protecting against infectious and inflammatory diseases. And in his research, he attributed these properties to the greater weight gain observed in the group that was exclusively fed human milk.

In a study carried out in the United Arab Emirates, it was found that the prenatal intention to breastfeed of pregnant women was significantly associated with the initiation of breastfeeding and the duration of exclusive breastfeeding. In addition, support from family and health professionals was significantly associated with initiation of breastfeeding and duration of exclusive breastfeeding. Despite the long-term adoption of WHO recommendations for breastfeeding in the UAE, rates remain suboptimal [21] and these results are similar to the findings of AIRES et al. [22], where it was found that women who have partners tend to be more successful in breastfeeding, compared to single mothers. Education also has an influence on breastfeeding, since women with complete high school and/or higher education are successful in breastfeeding and are more likely to not abandon the lactation process. Regarding gestational age, instruments and a support network are needed to facilitate the process of breastfeeding in preterm newborns during their time in the hospital.

According to CHAVES et al. [14] maternal self-efficacy, which is related to obtaining maternal confidence about the mechanisms and important information for natural breastfeeding to occur, is a relevant factor to be able to maintain exclusive breastfeeding until the baby's sixth month and then complementary breastfeeding. Thus, MINOSSO et al. [23] reiterates the benefits of guidelines for pregnant women in prenatal care, combined mainly with the continuity of this support by the multidisciplinary team in the maternity ward, especially in the interaction of the mother with the baby, reasons that minimize the difficulties of this process, and avoid abandonment. of breastfeeding, in view of the maternal concerns with the



correct latch, postpartum recovery and the support network. CHAVES et al. [14] highlights that the early separation between the mother and the newborn baby, due to hospitalization, represents a great challenge to establish the affective bond between the two, a factor that is essential and responsible for breastfeeding to occur and maintain it.

According to SILVA and BRAGA [24] the environment in the maternity hospital should favor exchanges between the newborn and the mother, the bond established between the two is linked to the development of the baby's emotional behavior, which encompasses the link between feelings emotional and behavioral. The skills that allow interaction and later attachment are what favors the child's physical and psycho-affective development in a healthy way NUNES et al. [16] identified in their study, intended for the kangaroo position in preterm newborns, that the baby presented greater demand and physical contact with the mother when submitted to a longer time in the kangaroo position, in addition, the first exchanges favor aspects of important interactions between mother and child during breastfeeding.

Studies show that there is a lack of essential information for the initiation of breastfeeding among mothers, and thus, strategies for disseminating knowledge about breastfeeding by health professionals in prenatal care, monitoring during hospitalization and after hospital discharge are necessary. , in particular, it is essential to support early breastfeeding, even during hospitalization, in which the multidisciplinary team is essential in this process, to obtain more studies that point out strategies to promote breastfeeding and the encouragement by the services of health in the construction of an environment that highlights the need for breastfeeding and contact between mother and baby [14, 23, 14].

## V. CONCLUSION

Research reveals that a breastfeeding premature infant is essential to ensure the healthy development of the child. In this context, aspects that influence breastfeeding and its continuation in the post-discharge period were attested. The separation between the mother and the preterm newborn resulting from early hospitalization is a major challenge for the establishment of breastfeeding, which tends to start later and have a shorter duration. The intention to breastfeed, support from family and health professionals, the presence of a partner and education are also factors that influence the exercise of breastfeeding.

The importance of guidelines regarding BF from prenatal care and the help of the multidisciplinary team was highlighted, which collaborate for the continuity of breastfeeding after hospitalization by encouraging the

experience, restoring and strengthening the mother-baby relationship. In this sense, the maternity environment should favor exchanges between the newborn and the mother, in order to reestablish the bond between them, guaranteeing the practice beyond the hospital. In addition, knowledge on the subject generates self-efficacy in infants, a factor that is also very important for ensuring the practice of breastfeeding.

It is believed that the role of health professionals in this scenario is of paramount importance, providing help, knowledge and support to families. There is a need for research, especially in the area of nutrition, that enrich the exercise of the profession and collaborate with teamwork, aiming at encouraging, protecting and supporting breastfeeding in prematurity.

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